

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 2-6 and 20-23 are pending herein. Claim 21 has been amended as supported by page 18, lines 14-19 of the present application, for example. Claim 2 has been amended to address a matter of form. New dependent claim 23 has been added as supported by page 18, lines 14-19 of the present application, for example.

Examiner Simone is thanked for courtesies extended to Applicants' undersigned representative during a telephonic interview on February 21, 2006. The substance of that interview has been incorporated into the following remarks.

1. Claims 2-6 and 20-22 were rejected under §102(b) and §103(a) over Ichiki. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-6 and 20-22, as submitted in the Amendment filed November 7, 2005, define patentable subject matter over the art of record. However, independent claim 21 has been amended to help expedite the prosecution and allowance of the present application.

Claim 21 recites a ribboned polarization-maintaining (P/M) fiber. Claim 21 has been amended to recite that the ribboned P/M fiber comprises a cured ribbon portion having first and second lateral ends and a length of 2 to 300 mm surrounding at least some of the P/M fibers.

Ichiki discloses, in Figs. 1-4, a process of manufacturing a ribboned P/M fiber array 20 including a substrate 22 attached to a holding member 24 using an adhesive 60. Paragraphs [0022] and [0023] of Ichiki (a partial English Translation of which is attached as Appendix A) recite that Fig. 3 discloses a pourable, uncured resin adhesive 60 placed over individual fibers that are only roughly adjusted. Paragraph [0024] discloses that the next step in the creation of the ribboned P/M fiber array is to place and hold the holding member 24 on the uncured adhesive 60 so that the individual fibers can be adjusted to a position where the assembly can function as a ribboned P/M fiber array. As disclosed in paragraph [0026], the holding member 24 is then held at a higher pressure until the adhesive is cured. Accordingly, the intermediate step of Fig.

3 (which is the drawing relied upon by the PTO) discloses roughly aligned individual fibers located in an uncured adhesive, which are not aligned to such a degree that they would function within the uncured adhesive 60 as a ribboned P/M fiber. Therefore, Ichiki fails to disclose a ribboned P/M fiber comprising a cured ribbon portion, as recited in claim 21.

In addition, Ichiki discloses, in paragraph [0022], that a groove 50 is placed in the substrate 22 to stop the adhesive from flowing out in front of the groove 50. Applicants respectfully submit that the uncured adhesive of Fig. 3 surrounds the individual fibers 42 only within the slot 50. In all other sections of the fiber array shown in Fig. 3, the adhesive does not surround the individual fibers 42. Furthermore, the cured adhesive of the completed product shown in Fig. 5 does not surround the P/M fibers at any location. This is due to contact between adjacent fibers, or contact between the fibers and the lower substrate 22 or the upper substrate 24 (please see the drawing sheet that was attached to the Amendment filed November 7, 2005).

In light of the foregoing, the only portion of the adhesive in Ichiki that could correspond to the claimed ribbon portion is that portion of uncured adhesive within the slot 50 in Fig. 3. However, the length of the slot 50 is 0.7 mm, not 2 to 300 mm, as claimed. The Examiner is respectfully requested to note that Fig. 1(b) of the present application appropriately designates the length direction as T, which is shown to extend along a lengthwise direction of the individual fibers. As described above, the purpose of the slot 50 in Ichiki is to stop the adhesive from flowing beyond the slot 50. As such, the length of the slot 50 (0.7 mm) is sufficient for this purpose. There is certainly no disclosure or suggestion in Ichiki to increase the length of the slot to a length of 2 to 300 mm, as recited in claim 21.

For at least the reasons outlined above, Ichiki fails to disclose the use of or motivate one skilled in the art to create a *cured* ribbon portion having a length of 2 to 300 mm surrounding at least some of the P/M fibers, as recited in claim 21. Since claims 2-6, 20 and 22 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 21, those claims

are also believed to be allowable over the applied art. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims herein define patentable subject matter over the art of record. Accordingly, Examiner Simone is requested to issue a Notice of Allowance in due course.

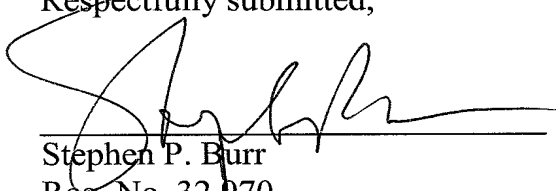
If Examiner Simone believes that contact with Applicants' attorney would be advantageous toward the disposition of this case, she is herein requested to call Applicants' attorney at the phone number noted below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

April 3, 2006

Date

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

Appendix A- Partial English Translation of paragraphs [0022]-[0023] of Ichiki